

#### T IS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE TO VENTURE TO THE BOTTOM

of the ocean, especially in areas far deeper than the limits for scuba divers, around 120 feet. As a marine biologist, I was part of a Department of Fish and Game group that had the opportunity to do this in November on board the *Delta*, a two-person submersible that is used for

marine research as well as treasure hunts and exploration of sunken ships. The dives occurred around the Channel Islands, off Santa Barbara, in recently adopted Marine Protected Areas.

We joined the staff from the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and scientists

from the University of California in a preliminary effort to conduct baseline characterization of the protected areas. Over the course of four days we dove 20 times in the *Delta* to depths between 250 and 1,000 feet to observe fish, invertebrates, and habitats. The research is part of a cooperative effort between the Department and the Sanctuary to develop an ongoing monitoring program.

The Sanctuary commissioned the *Delta* to conduct initial dives in the deeper waters of the protected areas. The submersible was supported by the *Velero 4*, a Seattle-

Story and Photos
by
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based privately owned research ship which has worked with the *Delta* off the California coast since October.

Diving in the *Delta* was a little like being in a fish bowl looking out. As I wiggled my way into the cramped interior, visions of canned sardines flashed through my mind. Inside, I familiarized myself with the sub's three video cameras and recording system that would catalogue our observations. The identifications and images would later be analyzed and linked to the sub's underwater position. Still, during my first time inside, I was surprised at the sub's basic technology. While it's capable of traveling to exceptional depths, I realized it's essentially a steel tube with fins and a propeller. The idea left me somewhere between a settling comfort and mild panic.

Inside the *Delta*, the pilot sits upright, his torso girded by the sub's conning tower. He views the underwater world through surrounding portholes. My location as the observer was just underneath the pilot, and any notion of comfort was quickly squelched. My vision came through a set of forward and side portholes, requiring me to twist and bend for the best view. Though I leaned on a pillow to cushion the hard steel, only a yoga expert could be truly comfortable.

With preparations completed, the Delta's hatch was closed

and sealed, and outside noises became muted. As we were hoisted into position there were a few bumps against the *Velero-4* before we were lowered into the waves. Almost immediately I felt the steel walls cool from the ocean's chilly temperature on the other side.

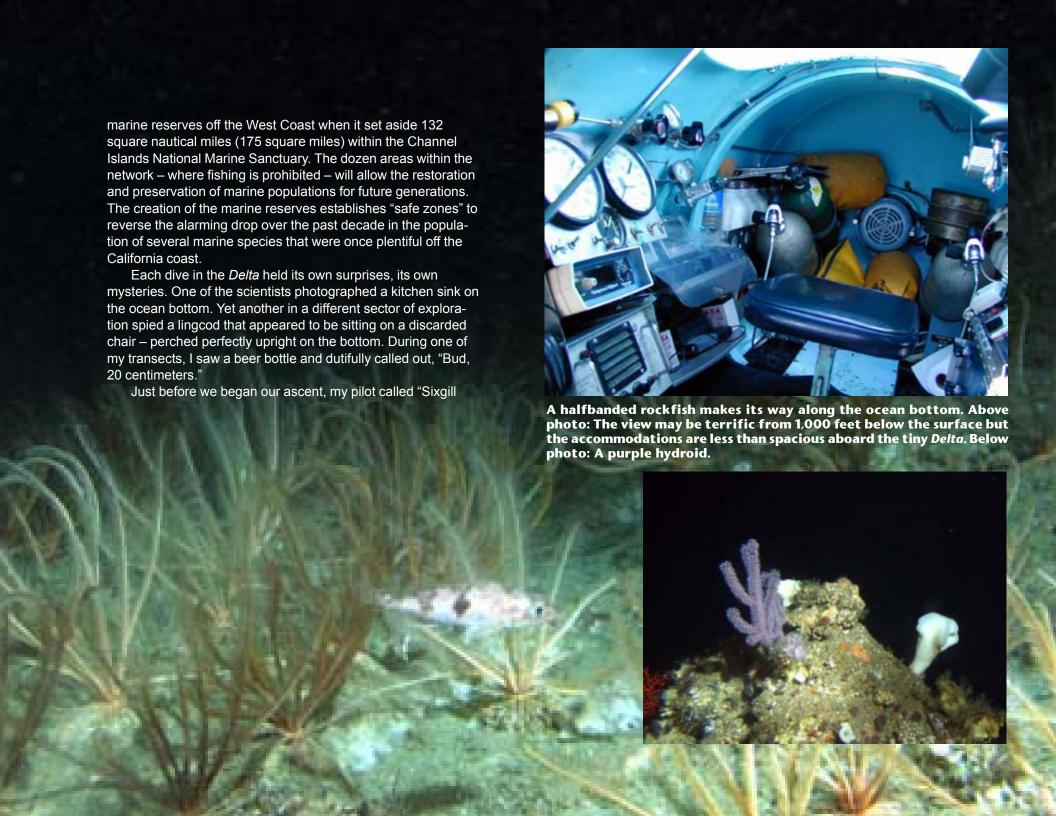
On my first dive the pilot calmly explained the safety features. "If something happens to me," he said, "open these valves then pick up the microphone and say, 'We're coming up, we're coming up, we're coming up." It seemed simple enough until I considered we might be 500 feet below the surface when something happened.

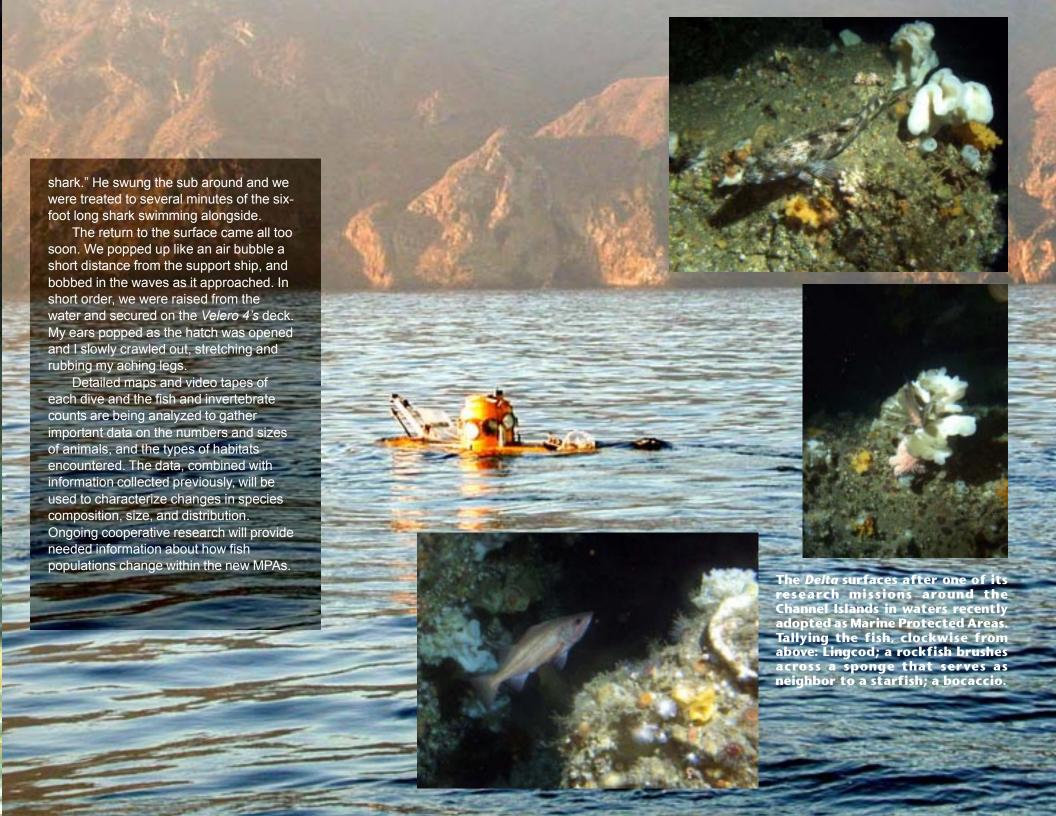
Shortly however, troubling thoughts disappeared as the sub began its descent into the dark green abyss. It felt a little like being in an elevator going down – only with a window to the sea. I watched as various jellies passed by the porthole, and noticed the light slowly fade. In just a little while all sense of motion was gone and we were suspended in a world of late



Previous page: A copper rockfish comes in for a closer look and is caught by one of the *Delta's* underwater cameras. This page: A pair of flag rockfish appear undisturbed by the presence of the underwater submersible.







## Salmon Festival's 'Schools Day' Spawns Youth Creativity

### By Sylvia Gude Conservation Education/Enforcement Branch

They're almost here! The buses are entering the parking lot. This is it! Are we ready? Have we thought of everything? We're about to find out!

Nearly 200 excited fourth-graders arrive at Nimbus Flats/Lake Natoma for the sixth annual American River Salmon Festival Schools Day event. The excitement is contagious, and soon we're busy organizing classes, passing out schedules, and getting the students started on the day's activities – all focused on the King – Chinook salmon that is.

After the initial rush of activity, things calm down a bit and my thoughts go back almost a year ago to when the Schools Day subcommittee began planning this event at four separate Sacramento County sites. In February, the subcommittees will again begin planning for next season's festival.

The subcommittee decided the best way to get teachers interested was to continue the six-year tradition of the first festival: Offer an art contest to involve students early in the year and motivate teachers to sign up for the October field trip. In February, fourth-grade teachers receive art contest rules and helpful hints encouraging student creativity to develop artwork featuring Chinook salmon in their natural habitat. The winning entry would be featured on the Salmon Festival poster.

Last year by the April deadline, we had 29 entries from 11 schools. The subcommittee members selected a student from Citrus Heights Elementary School as the 2002 grand



A fourth-grader's winning entry for the next Salmon Festival poster

prize winner. Her colorful drawing of Chinook salmon swimming along the stream bottom created an impressive image for the festival poster. The winner received a certificate of recognition, a savings bond, and the American River Salmon Festival T-shirt. Two subcommittee members traveled to the school for a celebration honoring the young artist and she was presented a framed portrait of the King.

At the Nimbus Hatchery, my thoughts are interrupted by the sound of exuberant children moving from one activity to another. They spend the morning participating in six learning

stations, each featuring a different aspect of the Chinook salmons' incredible journey from streams to ocean and back again. Stations include fish anatomy, "Streamside Jeopardy," the Project WILD "Hooks & Ladders" activity, a nature walk, and water quality investigation. It's a great way for children to learn in a local "outdoor classroom," gain an appreciation for the river, and recognize the importance of protecting fish, wildlife, and habitat.

For more information about the October American River Salmon Festival, please check out the website at www.SalmonFestival.net.

# **CSECC Chair Pens Letter of Thanks for Employees' Giving During Contribution Drive**

Capital Region's State Employees' Charitable Campaign reached \$42,000 in pledges, surpasses expectations

Dear Co-workers:

In spite of the economy's downward turn and gloomy rumors of budget reductions, Department of Fish and Game employees in the Sacramento region have been giving generously of their hearts, time, and wallets.

This year's State Employees' Charitable Campaign (Capital Region) surpassed expectations with more than \$42,000 pledged for 2003 by Department staff. The United Way will distribute this money to the throngs of non-profit organizations such as Loaves and Fishes, the Alzheimer Aid Society, the Nature Conservancy, One Hundred Black Men of Sacramento, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, WEAVE, Firefighters Pacific Burn Institute, Habitat for Humanity, Oak Park Preschool, and so many more community-building agencies.

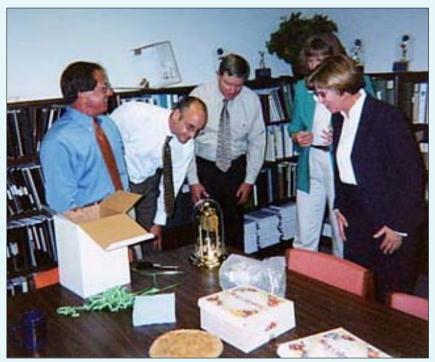
Donations have not stopped with the Campaign. Employees are responding enthusiastically to food- and coat-drives, and so many of you give privately as well.

Your values are demonstrated by your deeds: through your work, your families, and your charitable concern for others whom you may not even know. While you expect no thanks for gifts you offer so humbly, I must take this opportunity to applaud your selflessness. You make this world a better place.

Thank you, Angela Barlow, CSECC Department Chair

P.S. When you get the chance, please take a moment to acknowledge your fellow employees who helped to organize this year's amazing effort: Sandy Daniel, Fish and Game Commission; Robert Long, Executive Office; Carmen Cua, Audits Branch; Paula Elledge, Legal Office; Winona Thompson, License and Revenue Branch; Gregory Farmer, Business Services; Beth Jarvis, Habitat Conservation Division; Robin Hughes, Wildlife Programs Branch; Margie Bowe, Fisheries Programs Branch; Leslie Laurance, Conservation Education and Enforcement Branch; Sue Damron, Office of Spill Prevention and Response; Kerry Wicker, Region 2; Robin Loessberg, Fiscal and Administrative Services Branch; Ivan Jackman, Human Resources Branch.

### WCB Recognizes Sarro, Woodward



After 30 years of state service, the Wildlife Conservation Board's Jim Sarro, left, assistant executive director for land acquisition, announced his retirement. At an impromptu celebration, he is joined by several members of the WCB staff, including Al Wright, executive director, center.

Photo by Scott Clemons



Wildlife Conservation Board budget officer Roxanne Woodward, right, is congratulated by Al Wright, the WCB's executive director, at her 25 years of state service celebration. Woodward received her award at the WCB office on Nov. 22, 2002.

Photo by Scott Clemons



# **Commendation for Marine Region's Aldrich**

Marine Region Warden Bob Aldrich, a 23-year veteran with the Department, received a Letter of Commendation recently during a squad training session. Capt. Dennis Davenport presented the award for Aldrich's dedicated efforts on a yearlong investigation of party boat violations in Bodega Bay. Aldrich's initiative and persistence resulted in several felony charges being filed against the skipper/owner of the boat by the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office. Aldrich also maintained a high case load in his assigned area while conducting the investigation. Aldrich is to be commended for his outstanding work on the investigation and his continuing efforts in his district, Davenport said.

